

DENGEKI G's

VOLUME THIRTEEN!

13

NOVEL



乃木若葉は ガーリッシュ 勇者である ナンバー

企画原案・シリーズ構成：タカヒロ（みなとそふと）

執筆：朱白あおい イラスト：BUNBUN 監修：Project 2H

著：渡 航

キャラクター原案・カラーイラスト：QP:flapper

モノクロイラスト：やむ茶

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D E N G E K I G ' s

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[DENGEKI G's NOVEL]



Great power comes at a great cost.

As they use the power of the fairies,

trump cards could possibly cause a buildup of ████████ in the heroes' bodies.

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Iyojima Anzu's Record

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—落花—



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企画原案・シリーズ構成／

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The technique we call the "trump card" is thought to be inherently related to a certain kind of necromancy.

It imbues the human body with an inhuman entity. So far, we have summoned the following fairies: Yuuna-san's Ichimokuren, Chikage-san's Shichinin Misaki, Tamacchi-sempai's Wanyudo, and Wakaba-san's Yoshitsune. Each of them has aspects of demons or vengeful spirit. Yoshitsune is renowned as a hero, but there are also legends of him becoming a vengeful spirit, cursing his elder brother Yoritomo to death.

Supernatural phenomena like séances and spirit possession have existed in human culture from time immemorial. Shamans. Blind spirit mediums. Animists. Polytheists. Such practitioners would evoke the inhuman into their own bodies. There are also phenomena of inugami or kitsune possession. Each with their own dangers. Inugami and kitsune possession were said to be curses.

The boundary between human and inhuman sometimes becomes blurred. In Japanese mythology, the Chibiki no Ishi (Thousand-Lugged Stone) placed at Yomotsu Hirasaka is known as one such boundary. Using the trump card is akin to soaking half your body beyond the boundary, and thus--

Anzu thought to herself at her desk in her room as she scribbled things like "Fairies = vengeful spirits? Dangers of the trump card" in her notebook. She had been studying for mathematics, but ended up getting distracted. She was worried about the other day when Tamako said something felt weird about her body.

Apparently Tamako had been feeling some discomfort ever since her second trump card use.

(We have been told that the trump card was dangerous...)

"Heyyyy! Anzuuu!"

As if to interrupt Anzu's thoughts, the door suddenly opened and Tamako entered the room. Anzu closed her notebook in a hurry.

"Oh, you're studying?"

"No, I was just about done. I thought it was about time I went to sleep."

Anzu tried to pretend everything was normal as she shook her head. She didn't want to say anything to agitate Tamako's anxiety.

"Oh, okay. Then Tama's gonna sleep with you too!"

"Tamacchi-sempai, I think you're just about the only one who can eagerly announce they're going to sleep like that."

Anzu smiled wryly.

The two girls got in bed together and turned off the lights.

The bed was only sized to accomodate one person, but since Tamako was small, they were able to sleep together by squeezing up next to each other.

This way they looked like real family. They were often told they looked like sisters. Neither Anzu nor Tamako were displeased to hear it.

"Anzu, if you and Tama were sisters, then that'd make Tama the big sister."

"Hmm, you sure, Tamacchi-sempai? I'm taller than you, so maybe I'd be the big sister."

"What!? Tama's the sempai, so she's the big sister, duh!"

"But we're the same age."

"No, but Tama's more big sister-y! Anzu's the little sister!"

Anzu chuckled as Tamako's childish words and demeanor belied her assertion of being the elder sister. That said, Anzu honestly didn't believe herself to be the elder sister figure either.

"Yeah, you're right. I think I'm the little sister too. You're the big sister, Tamacchi-sempai."

"I know, right! Okay, now that that's settled, why don't we become sisters for real?"

Tamako hugged Anzu. Anzu hugged tightly back.

"Ahahah, yeah. I'm sure we'll get along great as sisters."

"Yeah, I know we'll be better than any other sisters in the whole world."

Tamako nodded in satisfaction. But her expression soon clouded over.

"But... what I don't know is how our next battle with the Vertexes will go..."

Just the other day, Hinata had received a new oracle. The first oracle since the heroes had returned from their expedition outside of Shikoku. According to the oracle, the next Vertex attack would soon occur. The enemy numbers would apparently be less than what was seen in the previous "Battle of Marugame Castle". However-- the circumstances would be unprecedented.

"Unprecedented circumstances? But each battle's been unprecedented."

"Yeah... but I feel there must be some sort of meaning behind dedicating an oracle about it..."

Anzu spoke with a heavy voice.

The oracle had spread an air of anxiety and unrest among the heroes these past few days. Chikage was even more on edge than usual, and Wakaba seemed tense.



"Man, it's April already and yet the mood's just not right for flower viewing."

"True. It's such a pity seeing as how the sakura blossoms are so beautiful around Marugame Castle."

Marugame Castle was a famous sakura viewing location. Now that April had come along, the seven hundred sakura trees of Kameyama Park within the castle grounds were beautifully in bloom.

"Let's sweep away those pesky Vertexes and go view the hell out of those flowers! It'd be too much to tama take if we just let all those petals fall."

"Yeah. But if we're going to go flower viewing, we need to prepare a picnic. What should we make?"

"Anzu, you can cook?"

"As long as it's something simple. If we're going to go flower viewing, we might as well prepare something ourselves rather than get something ready-made."

"Alrighty! In that case, Tama will catch fish in the nearby river and cut out their little tama tummies! I'll show you the deliciousness of freshly cooked fish!"

"Somehow that doesn't seem quite right for flower viewing..."

"But why not? It's fun."

"Yeah."

Anzu nodded with a smile.

In the classroom the next day, Tamako and Anzu discussed holding a flower viewing party with the others.

"Sounds fun! Let's do it! Let's do it!"

"Yes, that sounds good. We simply cannot stay in Marugame Castle and NOT go flower viewing."

Yuuna and Anzu seemed on-board. Wakaba nodded too, saying "Not bad. Sounds like a good way to relax."

"But... we don't know when the Vertexes are coming... Is it really okay for us... to let our guard down like that...?"

Chikage objected.

But Yuuna simply pinched Chikage's cheeks to make her relax her tensed face.

"L-lleggo mah heeks..."

"Gun-chan, you look too serious. What's wrong with a little flower viewing!? I wanna go flower viewing with you, Gun-chan."

Yuuna said that before letting go of Chikage's cheeks.

"... Well, if you say so, Takashima-san..."

Chikage nodded in resignation as she rubbed her reddened cheeks.

"Okay, then once our next Vertex battle's over, let's go flower viewing to celebrate!! I suddenly feel pumped up!"

Tamako cheerfully raised her hands in the air.

Planning a victory celebration before the battle might seem hasty, but victory was the only option afforded to the heroes either way.

Anzu gazed outside the classroom window down below to the sakura trees blooming in the Marugame Castle grounds.

"Hopefully we can go flower viewing soon..."

For flowers' lives are short.

So before they fall--

That evening. The forestization warning sound rang from the heroes' smartphones.

As they donned their battle garments, the heroes stood upon the vegetation-covered land of Shikoku. From beyond the Seto Inland Sea-- from outside the barrier, they say the Vertexes advance.

"Oh, seems kinda wimpy for 'unprecedented circumstances'."

Tamako slumped her shoulders at the anticlimactic turn of events.

The enemies probably numbered less than a thousand. The heroes had claimed victory against larger numbers in the "Battle of Marugame Castle".

"Don't let your guard down, Tamako. It's easy to slip up while under a false sense of security."

"Yeah yeah. You gotta lighten up, Wakaba."

Despite her lax demeanor, Tamako held her bladed yo-yo close.



Yuuna gripped her tekko and Chikage readied her scythe. As everyone prepared for battle, Anzu spoke up.

"Umm! Everyone, please listen!"

All the heroes turned their attention towards Anzu.

"What's wrong...?"

Chikage sent her a quizzical gaze.

Anzu responded with a serious look on her face.

"Let's not use trump cards this time."

"Okay... but why...?"

Chikage looked at Anzu somewhat confused.

"The Taisha have already told us to avoid using the power of the fairies... so there might really be a risk associated with them."

"... But depending on the circumstances, we might have no choice but to use them... you know..."
Anzu couldn't object to Chikage's reasoning.

The fact of the matter was that in all of their battles so far, defeating an evolved Vertex often required relying on the power of the fairies. There was no guarantee the enemy wouldn't evolve this fight, and thus there was no guarantee the heroes could fight without using trump cards--

"But I think An-chan's right. We'd be better off not using them. You know what they say. A wise guy keeps away from danger!"

Yuuna nodded vigorously.

A faintly wry smile formed upon Wakaba's lips as she said

"You mean a wise man, right?"

"Oh, was that it?"

"Anyway, Anzu has a point. Let's avoid using trump cards as much as we can this time."

"..."

After Wakaba and Yuuna agreed with Anzu, Chikage had nothing more to say.

"More importantly, the enemy's coming, guys!"

Tamako's words brought everyone's attention back to the swarming Vertexes.

Anzu and Tamako worked in tandem to face off against the Vertex horde. Anzu shot down the enemies with precise marksmanship while Tamako cleaved down the enemies with her bladed yo-yo.

As they fought, Anzu looked about their surroundings. As usual, Wakaba was exterminating Vertexes with relentless strength. Yuuna was fighting recklessly as well, and Chikage was destroying enemies with an even more bloodcurdling intensity than before.

Fighting common Vertexes had become second nature to the heroes. They had fought against countless hordes of Vertexes to protect Shikoku already. Not even a thousand of them would be any trouble.

Anzu cautiously observed the enemies' movements. If she spotted any Vertexes threatening to fuse, she shot them down immediately with her crossbow. She would not allow them any time to fuse into an evolved form. It was a strategy well-suited for a long-range specialist like Anzu.

(We should be fine as long as we don't let them fuse...!)

Anzu fought with that prayer in mind.

If any evolved Vertexes were to appear, Tamako would surely use the power of the fairies to fight it. As they had seen in the expedition outside of Shikoku, Tamako was the type who gave into the momentum too easily. She had little restraint to using trump cards.

Anzu didn't want to let Tamako use trump cards. She was unsure if the power of the fairies did in fact have a negative influence, but if there was even the smallest possibility that were the case, then Anzu didn't want to expose Tamako to that risk.

But Anzu's prayers were left unanswered.

Nearly a hundred Vertexes began gathering at the same place.

"Oh no...!"

Anzu fired her crossbow, but even though she shot down several of the fusing Vertexes, she could not fell all of them. Since the other heroes were too far away, their attacks wouldn't reach.

The vertexes fused--

"We got no choice! I'm gonna use a trump card!"

"Wait! I'll do it!"

Anzu shouted for Tamako to stop and then closed her eyes and focused her concentration within herself.

The heroes had a spiritual connection to the Shinju. Anzu traced that connection back to call forth the power of the fairies from the Shinju and imbue it within herself.



The fairy Anzu imbued within herself-- Yukijoro (the snow woman).

An embodiment of all-freezing snow and cold. A symbol of death.

Enveloped in the power of the fairy, Anzu's hero garments transformed.

"Tamacchi-sempai, please stay put. I'll take these guys down myself...!"

Anzu raised her crossbow to the sky, shooting out not arrows, but multitudes of white particles.

Or rather, particles of snow. The crossbow snow blotted out the sky.

And not a moment later, the snow became a blizzard. The relentless cold and the furious flurry rained down over the forestized Marugame City in its entirety.

"S-so cold!!!!"

Tamako's shouting echoed in the snow storm.

"An-chaaaa!? What's with the blizzard~~?"

"There's zero visibility! We can't see either friend or foe!"

"It's... cold..."

The voices of Anzu's teammates echoed in the snow storm's blinding whiteness.

"Please stay still everyone! It's too dangerous to move! I'll sweep up all the enemies! Leave it to me!"

The power of Anzu's Yukijoro was to cover a wide-reaching area in intense cold. If it weren't for their hero clothes, the other heroes would not have been able to withstand the cold either. They would likely have frozen to death in mere seconds.

Conversely, the merciless cold would freeze the Vertexes.

After a few minutes, the blizzard finally settled. When visibility cleared up, just about all of the Vertexes had been frozen solid, including the dozens that were trying to fuse, right before they could complete their evolved form.

One by one, the frozen Vertexes fell to the ground, shattering along with the ice. Few Vertexes had escaped becoming frozen.

"Ohh, pretty nice... Anzu."

Tamako muttered in blank surprise at the majesty of Anzu's attack.

"Way to go, An-chaaaan! There are only a few enemies left now!"

Yuuna started beating up the surviving Vertexes.

Wakaba and Chikage likewise swung their weapons to sweep up the remaining enemy forces.

"But Anzu, you said not to use trump cards! Are you sure you're okay!?"

Wakaba shouted to Anzu as she swung her sword.

"Ah, yeah, that's right, Anzu! You said it was dangerous..."

Tamako scolded Anzu out of worry as well.

"Umm, I'm okay, probably... That was my first time using fairy power after all. It was safer for me to have used it than anyone else."

Anzu replied with some risky reasoning. There was no proof that fewer uses meant lesser risk, but it was better than risking Tamako use it considering she had already displayed irregularities. To prevent the others from using trump cards, Anzu had to use one herself.

"Well, whatever. Lecturing can come later! Right now we need to take care of the remaining--"

Right as Tamako spoke, she turned towards the Seto Inland Sea.

And there, beyond the barrier, she saw something bizarre.

A Vertex horde-- incoming reinforcements. But most conspicuous out of the whole group was what was spearheading the flock of common Vertexes: a giant monster. It was most likely an evolved Vertex, but they hadn't seen anything of that scale since the incomplete evolved Vertex that appeared in the final minutes of the "Battle of Marugame Castle".

"... That doesn't look good..."

Even the optimistic Tamako turned pale at the sight of that evolved Vertex. Just a single look was enough to tell that it was on a whole new level compared to the enemies they had fought before. The other heroes began to take precautions about the giant Vertex. They began to question whether or not they should commence an attack.

"It kinda looks like... a giant shrimp, doesn't it...?"

"I think it's more like a scorpion... Takashima-san..."

The monster had an abdomen containing an ominous liquid, An organ resembling a scorpion tail, complete with a giant needle.

Imbued with Yukijoro's power, Anzu kicked off the ground and leapt towards the scorpion-type Vertex. She then turned her crossbow towards it.

"Freeze!"



The snow and fierce cold shot from the crossbow towards the giant Vertex. This time, the attack wasn't wide-reaching, but rather focused on one point, and was thus much more intense. Several common Vertexes that were near the scorpion were frozen by the sheer cold of the shockwaves and shattered.

However--

The scorpion-type Vertex was completely unaffected. Its body was merely coated in snow, its body unfrozen.

"No way...!"

Shock spread across Anzu's face.

The next moment, the scorpion's tail swung down at Anzu, its sharp needle threatening to skewer the girl.

"Wah!?"

Anzu dodged by a hair's breadth, jumping backwards to distance herself from the enemy.

(The fairy's power was ineffective...? Then how do we...!?)

In the meantime, other common Vertexes began to fuse.

Tamako, Wakaba, Yuuna, and Chikage were each about to be attacked by evolved Vertexes, albeit ones smaller than the scorpion-type.

"Kh...!"

"This is bad, Wakaba-chan! If this many evolve at once...!"

Wakaba and Yuuna fought desperately, but the situation was clearly unfavorable.

"I'll use... a trump card...!"

The quickest to make that decision was Chikage.

"Please wait, Chikage-san!!"

Ignoring Anzu's call for her to stop, Chikage activated a trump card. Chikage's hero garments transformed and she appeared in seven places at once. It was the power of the Shichinin Misaki. At that signal, the other girls began activating trump cards one by one.

"You have to adapt to circumstances. There's no time to hesitate!"

"... Yeah!"

Wakaba and Yuuna imbued their bodies with Yoshitsune and Ichimokuren respectively.



(Ahh... so in the end, everyone ended up using the power of the fairies...)

As she watched the sight of the heroes using trump cards one after the other, Anzu regretted her own power insufficiency. If only she were stronger, the others wouldn't have had to use trump cards--

"Anzu, look out!"

"!?"

Tamako's voice snapped Anzu back to her senses. She looked up to find the Vertex scorpion tail coming right at her. She couldn't dodge it--

Not a moment too soon, Tamako came to her rescue, riding her bladed yo-yo super-sized by Wanyudo. Tamako took Anzu by the hand and pulled her on board.

But though they had avoided a direct hit, the tip of the tail needle grazed Anzu's left arm.

"!?"

"Anzu, are you hurt!?"

Anzu shook her head to ease Tamako's worries.

"It's just a scratch... huh?"

She was only lightly grazed, but the area around her wound was red and swollen. Her entire left arm had gone numb and lost sensation.

Tamako looked at Anzu's arm as she steered the bladed yo-yo away from the giant Vertex.

"Anzu, your arm..."

"... That Vertex's needle... is venomous..."

"Khh... damn it...!"

Tamako glared at the scorpion-type Vertex.

But Anzu refused to show any weakness. She gripped her crossbow tight in her right hand and said;

"My right arm is fine, so I can still fight!"

"... Okay. Then let's get this fight over quickly so we can patch you up!"

Tamako then gazed at the scorpion-type Vertex. As if it had its sights set on Anzu and Tamako as well, the scorpion swung its tail needle at the bladed yo-yo.

"Offense is the greatest defense! Anzu, let's double team it!"

"Yeah!"

Yukijoro and Wanyudo. Ice and fire. The cold by itself was ineffective, but this Vertex could possibly be weak to fire, or an extreme temperature change could possibly damage it.

The bladed yo-yo approached the scorpion, slipping past the incoming tail needle. Anzu fired a blizzard at the scorpion-type Vertex. Tamako then kept ramming the giant flaming yo-yo at the same spot hit by the blizzard.

"Gooooo!!"

"Please work---!"

Despite their desperate cries, their combination attack merely scratched the Vertex's body. The Vertex shook off the bladed yo-yo with a whip of its tail, forcing the two to fall back once more.

"It didn't work at all!"

Tamako's Wanyudo had the most power out of the heroes' trump cards due to the sheer size it made her bladed yo-yo. If that wasn't enough to work, then even if they combined all of the other heroes' trump cards together, it still wouldn't be of any use.

In other words, this scorpion-type Vertex had more stamina than all of the heroes currently had the power to combat.

Nobody had expected this situation. Perhaps not even the Taisha.

Despair spread throughout Anzu's heart.

The next moment, the Vertex's giant tail struck Anzu and Tamako. A shock ran through their bodies as if they had been hit by a truck. The fairy enhancement subsided as Anzu and Tamako fell from the sky.

"Tamako! Anzu!"

Wakaba went to save Anzu and Tamako after they had taken a hit from the scorpion Vertex. Imbued with the power of Yoshitsune, Wakaba had the *hasso tobi* ability, allowing her to quickly reach them--

But several evolved Vertexes stood in her way.

It would be simple to defeat just one of them, but not when they outnumbered her.

"Khh....!"

She looked around to see Yuuna and Chikage both fighting several evolved Vertexes of their own.

They couldn't mobilize easily in this situation.



Anzu had lost consciousness when she struck the ground.

"Anzu!! Wake up!"

Tamako called out to her, but she wouldn't open her eyes.

"Dammit...!"

The scorpion-type Vertex hadn't lost sight of them. It approached them with its sights set and swung down its tail once more.

"Damn ittttt!"

Without Wanyudo's power, Tamako could only transform her normal-sized bladed yo-yo into shield form to defend against the tail needle.

"Ghh, uughh...!"

The giant Vertex's attack was intense, nearly blowing her back. But it wasn't satisfied with just one attack. It relentlessly stabbed with its tail needle over and over again. It was filled with the simple tenacity to kill.

Clang!

Clang!!

Clang!!!

"Ughhhhh...!"

With each intense blow, Tamako clenched her teeth and steeled her feet to bear it.

Clang!

Clang! Clang!! Clang!!!

"Uuuuuuuuuhh...!!!"

With every blocked blow, Tamako felt as if every bone in her body was shattering. Her feet sunk into the ground. She could hear her arms grinding inside.

But nevertheless, Tamako would not run away.

As she stood with her bladed yo-yo in shield form, behind her was Anzu, passed out. If Tamako stopped defending against the attacks, Anzu would be pierced by the tail needle.

"... Ugh... Ta-Tamacchi... sempai...?"

When Anzu finally came to, she saw a terrific sight before her eyes. The scorpion relentlessly striking its tail, and Tamako protecting her from it.

"Y-you awake...!?"

"Tamacchi-sempai...?"

"Hurry, run away... Anzu...!"

"What are you saying!? Tamacchi-sempai, you need to run away!"

But as she blocked the scorpion Vertex's attacks with her bladed yo-yo shield, Tamako simply shook her head.

"Tama... can't..."

"Why not...!?"

"These attacks... have numbed my legs...! Maybe... shattered my bones even... I can't move...!"

"...!"

Anzu was at a loss for words.

Meanwhile, the scorpion tail continued to bore away at Tamako's bladed yo-yo.

"At the very least... you need to run away, Anzu...!"

"I can't! How can I!?"

"At this rate...! We'll both die...!"

"No! No, can't be! There's still something, anything we can do...!"

Something similar had happened before. Tamako had gotten injured protecting Anzu from a Vertex attack.

No matter what happened, Tamako always protected Anzu even if it meant harm came to her instead.

Anzu couldn't just leave her alone and escape by herself.

"Anzu... you're so stubborn...!"

Tamako's bladed yo-yo began to crack under the stress of the repeated scorpion tail strikes.

"I don't care! I won't ever desert you!"

Anzu stood up and readied her crossbow.

(Anzu... Just run already...!)



Anzu stubbornly stood in place and fired arrows at the giant Vertex.

But the arrows merely stuck into the surface of the enemy's body, dealing no significant visible damage whatsoever.

(If you won't run away... then I've got no choice but to protect you...!)

The tail needle attacks further intensified. The force of each individual attack increased and the time between attacks shortened as well.

Clang!!

Clang!!

If she were an ordinary girl, Tamako's small body would've been torn to shreds with just a single attack.

(But I'll still protect her...!!)

The shock from each attack shook her brain, clouding her consciousness.

She felt as if each bone in her body broke, her muscles tore, her internal organs ruptured, her innards turned to mush.

(But I'll still protect her...!!)

She could no longer even tell if she was still standing.

She could no longer tell if her body was still in a humanoid shape.

(I'll protect her...!)

And yet Tamako continued to protect Anzu from the tail needle attacks.

The crack in her bladed yo-yo widened.

(I won't let you... touch a hair on Anzu's head...!)

Protect Anzu-- that was above all else, the Tamako's top priority.

(Tama's bladed yo-yo is... "Kamuyatachime" [Divine house shield]...!)

The spiritual power imbued in her bladed yo-yo was called as such by miko.

Kamuyatachime was the very concept of a "shield" formed by the aggregate god of the land god kings.

Due to Tamako's personality, she had been using her weapon offensively.

But its original nature-- was a shield.

Not a weapon for offense, but a guard for defense.

A sacred treasure that seemed to embody the desire "to protect Anzu".

(Tama is a shield! Anzu's shield...! So please, let me protect her...!)

Under the protection of Tamako's shield, Anzu kept firing arrows with her crossbow.

The golden arrows pierced into the Vertex.

(Even if each single shot is ineffective... as long as I keep attacking, then....!)

The name of the spiritual power imbued in Anzu's crossbow was "Kinkyusen" (golden bow and arrow).

According to legend, a single shot of the golden bow and arrow could shatter the bedrock of a cave. It was a weapon with that much destructive force.

It was truly a strange situation indeed.

The rambunctious, aggressive Tamako was given a defensive shield. The docile, introverted Anzu was given a destructive bow and arrow.

But perhaps in some sense each weapon matched its owner's inner feelings.

Tamako wanted to protect Anzu.

Anzu wanted to be strong like Tamako.

In that sense, giving Tamako a defensive weapon and Anzu an offensive weapon was appropriate for their individual desires.

(If Tamacchi-sempai's going to protect me... Then I'll defeat the enemy for her!)

Anzu fired shot at the scorpion-type Vertex with golden arrows which could shatter stone.

But their hopes and desires were meaningless before the overwhelming might.

The crack in Tamako's shield widened.

The arrows from Anzu's bow were ineffective.

And finally-- the shield shattered.

"Ah..."

The Vertex's tail needle pierced Tamako's abdomen.

The needle then skewered Anzu behind her as well.

"Agh, aagghhhhhhhhh!?"

A scream leaked out of Tamako's mouth.

Not from pain, but from the despair of failing to protect Anzu.

The thick needle was piercing through Tamako's abdomen. She turned around. There she saw Anzu, pierced in the chest. The light was already gone from her eyes.



(I need to remove the needle or IT HURTS IT HURTS IT HURTS Anzu will die she wasn't pierced in the heart so she might still survive everything will be fine IT HURTS I can't think the scorpion poison's in Tama's tummy get the needle out my innards are done for it's a fatal wound crap gotta save Anzu gotta get the needle out of her lung--)

What came out of Tamako's mouth the next moment wasn't a voice, but copious volumes of blood. And not just from her mouth, but from her eyes, ears, and nose. Blood spilled. Perhaps due to the poison, she experienced bizarre symptoms that could not be explained by the stab wound alone.

Anzu's limp body too began to ooze blood from every orifice.

Tamako's sight darkened.

At the very end, she felt as if she heard someone shouting. But she could no longer tell who it was.

"Rrooooghhhhh!!!"

Wakaba howled as she made her way towards the scorpion-type Vertex. She had finally swept away the evolved Vertexes that had been blocking her way.

Her body swelled with the mortification of being unable to save Tamako and Anzu and her rage against the Vertex.

The scorpion shook its tail as if to wipe away unwanted filth, flinging off Tamako and Anzu's skewered bodies. And now it swung its tail needle at Wakaba.

"Rrroooohhhhhh!!!"

Wakaba, her physical ability augmented by the fairy Yoshitsune, dodged the tail needle attack and swung her sword enraged.

She slashed at the scorpion-type Vertex dozens, hundreds of times... faster than the human eye could see. But she merely scratched the surface of its body, seemingly to no effect.

"Ahhhhhh!!!"

Screaming out of despair, Chikage began slicing away at the scorpion-type Vertex as well. With the power of the Shichinin Misaki, seven Chikages swung their scythes at once-- but to no effect.

As they slashed away, one by one, a Chikage would get stabbed and vanish, only for a new one to take her place. As long as she was protected by the Shichinin Misaki's ability, she would not die unless all seven Chikages received a fatal wound simultaneously. Without that divine protection, she likely would've died in an instant.

The Chikages kept swinging their scythes, paying no heed to how they were getting stabbed one after the other.

Before the overwhelming might of the enemy, fear had her at the edge of sanity.

It was an evolved Vertex that not even trump cards could handle.

No, "evolved" didn't even begin to describe it.

It was a "perfect Vertex".

The enemy's true form.

The white monsters the heroes had been fighting up until now were not even Vertexes.

"An-chan!! Tama-chaaaaaan!!"

Yuuna rushed up to Tamako and Anzu, whose bodies had fallen to the forestized ground.

"...!!!"

The sight of their bodies robbed Yuuna of any words.

Their bodies were covered in blood. Tamako's abdomen and Anzu's chest each had gaping holes. Their wounds were clearly fatal at first glance. No medical treatment, nor miracle had any hope at all of saving their lives--

And yet they were still alive. They grasped each other's hands as if to make sure they were still there.

They were losing their sight, hearing, and capability to think. Everything. Faced with their impending deaths, Tamako and Anzu grasped each others' hands.

The sensation of the other's hand was one thing they had left.

As her consciousness faded, Tamako thought to herself-- The next time I'm reborn, I want to be with Anzu. It would be nice to be real sisters...

Even without exchanging words, Anzu wished for the same thing-- If I were to be reborn, I pray I'll be with Tamako. I'm sure we can be sisters next time...

And then-- their hands lost their strength.

Their arrangements to hold a flower viewing party would go unfulfilled.

"Waahhhhhhh!!!"

Yuuna's cry echoed through the forestized world.

She disconnected from Ichimokuren's power and immediately used a second fairy's power.

A fairy particularly feared by the Taisha, and thus a fairy the heroes were strictly ordered never to use-- Yuuna would now unleash that fairy's power.

"Come--"

King of oni.

Born of the land snake who dared bare its fangs at the heavenly gods.

One of the nations three great evil yokai.

Incarnation of unparalleled power.

"--Shuten-doji!!!"

(Chapter 13 End)

